

Amendments to the Drawings:

Replacement sheets incorporating the omitted references numerals noted by the Examiner are attached hereto.

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 14-26 are pending herein, claim 14 being independent. By the amendment above, claims 14-26 have been canceled and replaced by new claims 27-46, claims 27 and 28 being independent. Claim 27 comprises (canceled) claim 16 re-written in independent form (including the limitations of independent claim 14 and intervening dependent claim 15 from which claim 16 depended) and with all objections and rejections thereto having been addressed. It is believed that claim 27 comprises only cosmetic amendments to the substance of canceled claim 16, although re-written in independent form. Claim 28 corresponded generally to claim 14, but has been amended to more clearly point out the invention. Claims 15-26 have been replaced, generally, by new claims 29-46. Claims 29-46 have been re-ordered, and re-worded, to overcome the deficiencies noted by the Examiner in the pending Office Action, including a lack of antecedent basis for certain claim elements, and indefiniteness for claiming a “preferred” narrow range within a broader range in the same claim. All of these deficiencies have been corrected. No new matter has been added.

In the pending Office Action, the Examiner has objected to the drawings for lacking certain reference numerals mentioned in the specification. Attached are replacement sheets for the drawings (labeled as such) which contain the inadvertently omitted reference numerals. Accordingly, withdrawal of this objection is respectfully solicited.

The Examiner also objected to the Abstract for use of legal phraseology therein. By the Amendment above, the Abstract has been amended to remove all legal phraseology therefrom. Withdrawal of this objection is also therefore respectfully solicited.

The Examiner rejected claims 14-26 under 35 U.S.C. §112, ¶2 as allegedly indefinite on two grounds. First, the Examiner characterized some of the claims as indefinite for having both broad ranges and “preferred” narrow ranges in the same claim. The new claims

presented herein do not have this deficiency, and so withdrawal of the rejection on this basis is respectfully solicited.

The Examiner also rejected certain claims as indefinite for lack of antecedent basis for certain claim limitations therein. The claims newly presented herein have addressed and corrected these deficiencies. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is also respectfully requested.

The Examiner also rejected claims 14, 15, 19, 20 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Veronesi, *et al.* It is respectfully submitted that the claims present allowable subject matter in light of Veronesi, *et al.*, and so are allowable thereover.

The following description of the invention is taken from the specification, and is provided for the convenience of the Examiner only. It is not intended to argue limitations not present in the claims or to limit the interpretation afforded to the claims.

The retractable thruster of the invention has been designed specifically for installation inside the bow/stern of 35' - 50' sailboats and yachts. In such vessels, very little room can be dedicated to the installation of a thruster because hydrodynamic properties of the hull and weight repartition must be maintained as though the thruster were not present. Consequently, the thruster must be light, compact and reliable to fulfill the above mentioned needs.

Lightness and compactness require the structure of the thruster to be as simple and small as possible and that the opening made in the hull to allow deployment of the thruster be as small as possible to limit introduction of water inside the hull after deployment, which could badly impact weight repartition.

Reliability requires that movements of the thruster be free and direct between retracted and deployed positions and that blocking of the propulsion unit between both positions be prevented.

The thruster of the present invention is light, compact and reliable because there is no physical axis of rotation of the propulsion unit and no driving gears or pistons to move said thruster between retracted and deployed positions.

The retractable thruster has a very compact structure compared with traditional thrusters. With no axis of rotation physically embodied in the hull, the space occupied by the thruster in the retracted position is greatly limited. The size of the closure plate, and opening in the hull, can also be minimized. With such a small opening in the hull for deploying the thruster, the hull's structural integrity is not affected, which is not the case with the thruster of Veronesi, *et al.* (described below).

Moreover, with the thruster of the invention, during the circular movement of the propulsion unit between the deployed and retracted positions, the closure plate never protrudes inside the hull, even partially, as it forms a sort of cap fixed under the propeller.

Thus, movements of the propulsion unit cannot be blocked by the position of the closure plate relative to the opening in the hull because the propulsion unit only moves away from the hull when the propeller is deployed.

Since the axis of rotation of the propulsion unit is not physically embodied in the hull, assembling, installing and maintaining the thruster are greatly simplified as no rotating shafts, bearings or coupling gears are needed to operate the thruster.

Veronesi, *et al.* neither teach nor suggest the retractable thruster of claim 14 (now claim 28), which comprises displacement means that enable uniform circular movement of the assembly about an axis of rotation that is not physically embodied in the hull and situated substantially no higher than the hull.

Veronesi, *et al.* only disclose a system for deploying a rescue propulsion unit under the hull of the water vehicle. The system includes means for pivotally mounting the propulsion unit with

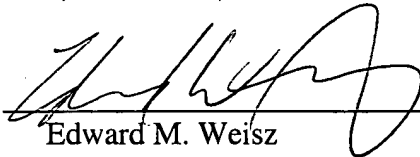
respect to the hull for allowing movements of the propulsion unit from a stored position inside the hull to a deployed position in the surrounding water. In operation, a drive assembly pivotally moves the propulsion unit between the stored and deployed positions, the drive assembly including a spur gear and worm gear driven by electric motor or, alternatively, hydraulic cylinders, to actuate pivoting of the propulsion unit. In each embodiment disclosed by Veronesi, *et al.*, the propulsion unit is pivoted about a material shaft or rod physically embodied and fixed to or within the hull. Thus, the drive means disclosed by Veronesi, *et al.* has nothing to do with the displacement means of the claimed thruster herein. Furthermore, Veronesi, *et al.* disclose a thruster being pivoted about a pivot shaft or rod hinged transversally in the hull opening or inside that opening, while the thruster of the invention has no physically embodied axis of rotation.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the invention as claimed herein is patentably distinct from the sole reference applied by the Examiner. There being no further grounds for objection or rejection, early and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

It is believed that no additional fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the present application. However, if any additional fees or charges are required at this time, they may be charged to our Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 03-2412.

Respectfully submitted,
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